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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 000425

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [XL](#)
SUBJECT: ST. KITTS AND NEVIS ELECTIONS: WAITING FOR THE
STARTING GUN

REF: BRIDGETOWN 417

Classified By: CDA D. Brent Hardt, Reason 1.4(b)

Summary

¶1. (C) Michael Morton, Chairman of the largest private sector entity on St. Kitts and Nevis and a strong opposition party supporter, told emboffs in a recent meeting that he believes Prime Minister Denzil Douglas and the St. Kitts and Nevis Labor Party (SKLP) did not call elections as expected on July 4th because they were unable to push through the constituency boundary changes they were trying to enact (reftel). Morton predicted the SKLP would call elections as soon as the boundary changes could be effected, but not later than the October constitutional deadline. Morton also claimed Douglas and the SKLP will attempt to use a new law to disqualify opposition candidates who hold dual citizenship, primarily U.S. citizenship, from running for office -- a claim supported by a recent rash of citizenship renunciations by likely opposition candidates (reftel). End summary.

SKLP Attempts to Change Boundaries

¶2. (C) According to Morton and press reports, the courts recently gave the opposition People's Action Movement (PAM) a stay on any constituency boundary changes and ordered the issue not be debated in parliament before it is resolved in the court system. However, the Attorney General ordered a recess of the courts and Prime Minister Douglas on July 7 introduced a bill to parliament to change the constituency boundaries in defiance of the court order. Morton predicted the SKLP will attempt to push through the boundary changes this week and then call for elections. Douglas, Morton said, fears holding the election with the boundaries as they are now and is using every trick in the book to have them changed.

PAM Candidates Rush to Renounce U.S. Citizenship

¶3. (C) Recently, several members of the PAM renounced their U.S. citizenship ahead of the expected elections. Dual citizenship has not been an issue in past elections in St. Kitts and Nevis, but recently parliament passed a law preventing candidates for parliament from having any allegiance to countries other than St. Kitts and Nevis, and requiring all candidates to renounce citizenship to other countries. Morton believes this is an effort by the Douglas government to disqualify several PAM candidates ahead of the elections. The authority to disqualify a candidate rests with each constituency's Returning Officer, who is appointed by the Douglas. Douglas, Morton said, knows it can take six

months for an individual to receive a certificate of renunciation from the USG and will attempt to use this new law to disqualify the PAM candidates he knows are U.S. citizens. Morton was adamant that any disqualification of PAM candidates under this law would be challenged, and speculated that it was likely a number of SKLP candidates also held dual citizenship.

Comment

¶4. (C) There has already been intense interest in the Kittitian media about the dual citizenship issue. We continue to adhere to the Department's guidelines regarding privacy act waivers with regards to these inquiries. As the hotly contested elections loom, we expect both constituency boundaries and citizenship issues to be a key part of the political mud-slinging.
HARDT